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DEVELOPING CULTURE POLICY: CANADA IN THE WORLD ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Marketa Geislerova,
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

May 12, 2000
Ottawa, Ontario

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REPORT FROM THE MEETING
DEVELOPING CULTURE POLICY - CANADA IN THE WORLD
May 12, 2000 (10:30 - 12:30)
Ottawa

In partnership with Hugh Stephens, Assistant Deputy Minister for Communications, Culture and Policy, and Minister Axworthy's office, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development initiated a discussion with broadcaster Ann Medina and Arts Director Colin Jackson on the further development of foreign affairs culture policy. The first roundtable was held with Heritage Canada officials to explore common interests and needs on May 12, 2000.

The participants agreed to the following steps:

1. Before the end of June an internal DFAIT meeting among Divisions to assess objectives, needs and current and planned activities. This meeting could benefit from a discussion paper. Heritage Canada might also consult internally.

2. An inter-department meeting to further explore the integration of culture in foreign policy and common/mutually supportive DFAIT and Heritage Canada interests and activities.

3. The CCFPD will prepare a short paper summarising any trends/themes in culture and values from cross Canada work with Canadians.

4. These efforts could be followed up by Hugh Stephens/ CCFPD with outside advisors, such as producers, IT business and others for a discussion on broad-based perspective of culture and foreign policy.

A number of points were made at the meeting that can help inform these steps :

1. There is a need to define a clear objective. What do we want to achieve and with what tools. (Ann Medina)

2. Culture in foreign policy might be stated in a stronger way: "the objective of Canada's foreign policy in a challenging word is to promote Canadian values and Canadian culture (including well-being, prosperity, peacekeeping, etc.)." (Steve Lee)

3. Foreign Policy needs to promote Canadian interests broadly defined. Culture policy in DFAIT has atrophied, there is a need to bring the pieces together. (Hugh Stephens)

4. If Canadians are the boy scouts of the world than lets built the campfire for the world to gather around. Canada can be seen and promoted around the world as a meeting place. It is important to apply our values to real life and in real terms. (Colin Jackson)

5. It is important to signal that we are thinking about culture in the broadest possible sense. Culture is not the "arts," although the arts are an important part and player.

6. It would be good to demonstrate the application of Canadian values: peace, mediation, diversity, tolerance, etc. We need to show that what we are and what we do as Canadians can address the urgent problems of the world.

7. The reality is that domestic culture policy takes shape in international circumstances and can help shape the international environment. The Heritage Canada objective is to ensure Canadian choices and to ensure that Canadians and the word have access to our culture. Voices, choices, spaces. (Michelle d'Auray)

Steve Lee, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, welcomed participants and drew attention to the ongoing contribution of Ann Medina, Colin Jackson and others to the development of the cultural component/pillar of Canada's foreign policy. He noted their earlier recommendation to avoid the term "pillar" and to seek some definitions and context that would fully reflect the desire and need to integrate culture into foreign policy and into the corporate environment of the Department (DFAIT). He thanked all participants for their interest in moving policy development forward and thanked Hugh Stephens for offering a leadership role in this process.

Hugh Stephens, Assistant Deputy Minister, Communications, Culture, Policy, noted the changes brought about by globalisation, including rapid advances in communications and transportation technologies, pose new challenges/threats and opportunities for Canada. Culture should be situated in the Human Security context of Canadian foreign policy, he said. One approach would be to shift the focus to a broader concept of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity encompasses a range of concepts/instruments that may be beneficial to Canadian foreign policy including collective Canadian norms/values (i.e., approaches and experience in diverse modes of coexistence and governance, for instance). Moreover, this approach could also be beneficial to Canadian identity. It also encompasses trade, investment and other economic issues.

A cultural diversity approach does not belong to any one department and it can not be carried out through traditional DFAIT programmes (i.e., mostly bilateral funding/programming through cultural ataches). It requires resources and an overall government engagement. The framework for the approach should be developed by DFAIT and Heritage Canada.

Following Hugh Stephens' remarks, Michelle d'Auray, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Heritage Canada, outlined her department's approach. She said that as the line between domestic and international policy becomes finer, Heritage Canada aims to ensure that Canadian choices/voices/spaces (i.e., Canadian values, interests, cultural products and services, etc.) are available to Canadians and are accessible to others. The question is, how to secure Canadian/domestic public space, including public institutions, law and regulatory systems, trade and other economic agreements in the context of globalisation? How to sustain Canadian choices/voices/spaces while promoting openness at the same time?

Some preliminary efforts have been undertaken to develop the cultural diversity approach by Heritage Canada (including Minister Copps' initiatives, co-operation with UNESCO, the Francophonie, and other organisations). Michelle d'Auray agreed with Hugh Stephens of the importance of shoring-up capacity of the two departments and moving forward collaboratively. She also drew attention to Canada's relationship with the United States and the special Canadian approach to diversity. Some U.S. officials have already started to use the language developed by Canada on culture and cultural diversity – a development that can be interpreted as a modest success. Moreover, the message, delivered through various channels such as the arts community, academic community, and Missions, has been reaching others beyond the trade-oriented American audience. The danger of the United States usurping the Canadian idea of cultural diversity and adopting it is its own was raised.

Colin Jackson, Calgary Arts Centre, pointed out that capacity to "set campfires" and share stories must be built so that Canadians can live up to their role as the "world's boy-scouts." *While the culture community should be supported, the Canadian government should apply values/norms in its own actions/processes (i.e., in the way it negotiates or mediates, for instance).*

Ann Medina addressed semantics of the ongoing discussions about culture and cultural diversity. She said that the expression "Third Pillar" and the word "culture" do not necessarily evoke the right ideas/concepts. The "Third Pillar" tends to isolate "culture" into an artificially separate category. Meanwhile, "culture" is mostly perceived as the arts (i.e., theatre, dance, music, painting). *There is a need to conceptualise culture more broadly as permeating other aspects of Canadian public (foreign) policy and as encompassing a range of collective values and norms (political, social, economic, etc.). Whatever the tool-box of the culture or Third Pillar approach might be, it must itself demonstrate the values Canada wants to promote (including openness, tolerance, the ability to listen, multiculturalism, etc.).* We must move beyond older concepts. Vision and leadership are necessary.

Hugh Stephens said that while the fundamental idea behind the Third Pillar is still there (i.e., to have a Canadian foreign policy which includes a value-agenda), it is necessary to take it further. The Third Pillar has led to new initiatives in governance and institution building. *Efforts should be made to include other DFAIT officials in the discussion. A memorandum could be developed. Co-operation and continued engagement are key.*

Michelle d'Auray raised the difficulty of engaging in broad cultural dialogue on the international level. Attention tends to revert to trade and investment issues. Building a broader understanding of culture, which would include the value of human and social development will be a challenge. How to address the dissonance between established democracies and fragile democracies or authoritarian regimes on values like political (and other) rights and freedoms? Another challenge confronting a unified discourse is the difference in how rich and poor countries tend to conceptualise culture. While the former tend to fall back on trade (agreements), the later often use culture to sustain their development. How to approach the extraordinary diversity in the world and, in effect, "to convince people to forget their distinctiveness in favour of diversity?" Sustaining culture may also be used or be seen as protectionist activity.

Despite these challenges, bridges should be built through international fora such as, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, G-8, and others besides UNESCO and the Francophonie. *A framework within which to operate internationally and domestically must be articulated and then communicated to the culture conduits (bureaucrats, artists, etc.). An outreach strategy should be developed. Resources will only be provided once it is clear that culture is central to (foreign) policy.*

Though Heritage Canada aims: "to ensure that Canadians have Canadian choices and to connect Canadians to the diverse Canadian experience," what does this connection mean?

The United Nations Conference on Racism could be a good opportunity for Canada to promote cultural diversity.

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List of participants
DEVELOPING CULTURE POLICY - CANADA IN THE WORLD
May 12, 2000 (10:30 - 12:30)
Ottawa

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Minister Axworthy's Office, DFAIT

Hugh Stephens
Assistant Deputy Minister, Communications, Culture and Policy, DFAIT

Steve Lee
Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Yves Gagnon
Director General, International Cultural Relations Bureau, DFAIT

Ann Medina
Toronto

Colin Jackson
Director, Calgary Arts Centre

Michelle d'Auray
Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Heritage Canada

Robin Higham
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Heritage Canada

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Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Les Enterprises canadiennes et la consolidation de la paix. Jean-Francois Rioux, Francisco-José Valiente, and Christian Geiser, Université du Québec a Montréal. Le 31 octobre 2000.

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Ballistic Missiles Foreign Experts Roundtable Report. Ernie Regehr, Project Ploughshares and Peter Moore, CCFPD. March 30, 2000.

NATO-Nuclear Weapons Roundtable Report. CCFPD. August 24-25, 2000.

Small Arms and the OAS Roundtable Report. CCFPD. April 28, 2000.

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Borders

Perspectives on the Borderless World: Issues for Canada. Heather Nicol and Ian Townsend-Gault. Fall 2000.

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Report from the Roundtable on Just War and Genocide. CCFPD. December 8-9, 2000.

Report from the Ottawa Roundtable for the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). CCFPD. January 15, 2001.

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[1] **Visit www.cfp-pec.gc.ca for more reports and other publications.**

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Children and Violent Conflict: Meeting the Challenge of Diversity. Erin Baines, Dalhousie University; Barry Burciul, University of Toronto. Summer 2000.

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